United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ United Nations should be involved in investigation of acts of violence by South African security forces, African National Congress tells Assembly as it continues apartheid debate.

+ After 12 days at sea, Somali refugees arrive in Aden, apparently with no casualties; in Geneva, actress Sophia Loren is appointed UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, with first priority the plight of 1 million Somali refugees.

+ Issues of human rights violations in Latvia and Estonia, and of assistance to Nicaragua to be added to the Assembly's agenda items, recommends General Committee.

+ Albania asks Secretary-General to put Macedonia under international observation to ensure rights of Albanian population in that country.

+ United Nations receives two new reports from United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina, respectively, on violations of humanitarian law in territory of former Yugoslavia.

+ Italy to convene donors conference on Mozambique in Rome on 15 and 16 December to solicit funds for electoral process and refugee programmes in that country.

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The United Nations should be involved in the investigation of South African security forces who took part in the violence in that country, the observer for the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) told the General Assembly this morning as it continued its debate on South Africa's apartheid policies.

He urged the Assembly to demand that the South African Government end the violence, take action against those forces and adopt the necessary measures to

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ensure free political activity in all parts of the country. The Assembly should also decide what role the United Nations should play to ensure free and fair elections, he said.

A number of representatives maintained that political negotiations offered the only viable means for South Africa's peaceful transition to a system of non-racial democracy. They called for the early resumption of negotiations on the development of a constitution based on democratic principles, equality and mutual trust.

Yesterday, the Chairman of the Special Committee Against Apartheid told the Assembly that Member States should not "equivocate, show fatigue or prematurely declare that apartheid was dead". Opening the debate on the apartheid policies of the South African Government, Ibrahim A. Gambari of Nigeria said that despite the cautious optimism evoked by developments last year, international actions against the evils of apartheid were as necessary as ever.

Most speakers agreed yesterday that sanctions should not be lifted until a democratically elected constituent assembly was in place and an agreed constitution had been drawn up. However, a draft resolution was introduced appealing to all States, institutions, organizations and individuals to offer greater financial and other assistance to the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for South Africa.

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Authorities in the Yemeni port of Aden today began disembarking Somali refugees from a ship that had carried them, with little food or water, on a gruelling 12-day voyage from the Somali port of Marka. Despite fears expressed earlier in the week about those on board, it appeared that no one had died at sea, and at least two women had given birth.

A team of doctors from Médecins Sans Frontières stood by to assist those in need of medical care, and relief workers distributed bread and bottles of water. The representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who was in Aden to oversee the evacuation from the ship, said that despite the appalling conditions they had endured, the refugees seemed to be in good shape.

Meanwhile, the plight of the Somali population was the focus of a ceremony today in which the High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, appointed film star Sophia Loren a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador. Mrs. Ogata said that Ms. Loren had selected as her first UNHCR mission the "sad predicament of the 1 million Somalis who have fled war, drought and famine".

Ms. Loren, who on Saturday begins a six-day tour of the Kenyan and Somali refugee operations, said it was a photograph of starving Somali child which sharpened her determination to help. "I know it is a human, instinctive

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reaction to remove from us anything that can disturb our eyes, but ... we must feel disturbed, we must feel shaken and ask ourselves which way we can be involved and help."

Mrs. Ogata said that one in every 137 people in the world had been forced into flight. Out of a global population of 5.2 billion, more than 18 million were refugees and another 20 million had been displaced in their own countries.

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The General Assembly has been asked to include two new items in its agenda for the current session: human rights violations in Latvia and Estonia; and international assistance for Nicaragua.

The request was made by the General Committee, which met this morning and decided to recommend that the item on human rights in Latvia and Estonia be allocated to the Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural), while the item on Nicaragua should be taken up in plenary and considered on a priority basis because of its urgent character. The item on emergency international assistance for Afghanistan would be reallocated from the Second Committee (Economic and Financial) to the plenary.

The Assembly is expected to take action on the recommendations on Friday, 20 November.

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Albania has asked Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to "use his influence that Macedonia be put under international observation" in order to avoid new bloodshed and to ensure the legitimate rights of the Albanian population in that country.

The request was contained in a letter of 16 November, to the Secretary-General, in which the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania, Alfred Serreqi, said the treatment of the Albanian population in Macedonia -- a former Yugoslav Republic -- was getting worse. He pointed to an incident last week in which four Albanians were killed, 30 wounded and more than 80 people arrested. Albanians were increasingly suspicious that the Macedonian side was not serious about its commitments to ensure the legitimate rights of the Albanian population in Macedonia, he said.
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The United Nations has received two new reports from the United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina, respectively, on violations of humanitarian law in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

The United States' report - the third to be submitted on the subject - was accompanied by a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 5 November, in which that country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations,

Edward Perkins, said the focus, as in the previous reports, was on grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. He noted that only substantiated information had been provided, namely eyewitness testimony or confirmed reports.

A similar report, entitled "Inside the Death Camps of Bosnia: the Savagery", written by Roy Gutman and published by New York Newsday, has been submitted by the Bosnian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Muhamed Sacirbey. In a letter, dated 9 November, Mr. Sacirbey said Mr. Gutman's report had been widely circulated and used as a source for subsequent reports by the international humanitarian organizations.

Both reports have been submitted to the five-member Commission of Experts on war crimes established by the Security Council last month.

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Italy will convene a donors conference on Mozambique in Rome on 15 and 16 December to solicit funds for the electoral process in that country, emergency programmes and programmes for the integration of displaced persons and refugees.

In a letter of 12 November, conveying that information to the Secretary-General, the Italian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Vieri Traxler, said the Conference would be convened in support of the Peace Agreement signed in Rome this October by the Government of Mozambique and the Mozambique National Resistence Movement (RENAMO).

The elections in Mozambique are scheduled for next October.
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